

Back Pain / The Gospel Spreads

Carol: OH my aching back! We spent two days painting and cleaning our bedroom this week and I am sore.) Have you ever had back pain? Did you know what to do? Often we make it worse because we don't know what to do. Keep listening and we'll hear how to look after our backs when we hurt them.

Hello, I'm Carol, and this is Women of Hope. Thanks for having us again.

Tammy: Hi, I'm Tammy. Yes, we have two stories today. First, our friend Beth is here to tell us a true story about Jenty and her back injury. Keep listening!

Storyteller: Jenty woke up early in the morning and stretched on her bed. She felt stiff and sore and one leg ached. Ah yesshe remembered that yesterday she had carried a big, heavy bundle of sticks and logs back to her house. And then she remembered something else - a stone in the little river had rolled under her foot and she had almost dropped her load right into the water. That would have been so disappointing after such a long hard walk. She'd lurched to get her balance and felt a twinge of pain low down in her back. During the night the pain had become a lot worse. Now the pain had spread- down across the back of her hips and thighs and down the side of her lower leg as well.

Just then Jenty's baby started to cry for his feed. He was nearly 3 months old. When Jenty tried to stand up she found she was not just stiff and weary from the walk, but she could hardly get up off the bed. Her back felt very painful and she couldn't stand up straight. Slowly and painfully she used her hands and a chair to help her get up onto her feet. She lurched across the room dragging one foot a little. As she leant over the crying baby, it felt as if there was a knife in her back. She gasped and clutched her back. The pain down her leg felt like very hot water running down her leg. She looked down; it looked ok but it didn't feel right at all!

Jenty felt scared and worried. She tried to pick up her precious baby but again the pain shot down her leg. She started to sweat. Then she thought about her neighbor who had back pain. Jenty had tried to help for a while but she secretly thought her friend should have been better after a few days, and she had wondered if she was pretending to be helpless so she could get more help. Now the neighbor stayed at home in bed by herself and she always complained about her pain. Jenty suddenly knew what it was like for her friend. She felt sorry, and scared; she didn't

want to be like that.

Jenty finally managed to pick up her howling baby. She put him to her breast but she was so sore she couldn't hold him comfortably, and he didn't feed well.

How she wished someone would come to help her. Her husband was away in the city doing truck work for the next two weeks. She felt frightened and alone. What could she do?

Jenty suddenly remembered something she had heard about Jesus when she was a child. She had heard he was the powerful Son of God. Her teacher said he loved her and he still heard the cries of people. She had not really believed this. She could not see him and she could not hear him, and why would Jesus listen to her cries anyway? But now she felt Jesus was her only hope. Jenty said, 'Jesus, Jesus, please help me!' She didn't know if there was a right way to speak to him, or if he understood her language, so she tried again in the language of the village across the river. Jenty wondered what Jesus would do. Would he drop out of the sky? ... or walk through the door?... Jenty wondered why she had remembered this name from when she was a child. She waited, but now she had a small sense of hope.

A little while later, she heard footsteps outside her house. Jenty called out 'Help', hoping it was someone she knew. It was her friend Narita! 'What's wrong Jenty?' she asked 'You look awful!' Jenty groaned and told her about the pain. She said, 'I think I hurt my back when I was crossing the stream and the load nearly slipped'.

Narita could see her pain was bad. She said 'Let me hold the baby while you get comfortable. Would you like me to get you some food? And I'll warm up some sand and put it in a bag for you to rest your back against; that might help. Have you got any pain tablets that are ok for when you're breast feeding? I think you need them, or you won't be able to move and you'll get stiff. I think you really need to rest so your back pain will get better. I'll care for the baby till he needs his next feed.'

Jenty ate some food and then some tablets for her pain and inflammation. She washed herself and got back onto her bed. She felt so grateful to her friend. 'Now try to relax,' said Narita. 'If you're tense and worried, that keeps your muscles tight and makes the pain worse'.

Then Narita told her, 'There's a new woman working at the health clinic, called a physiotherapist. She helps people with problems like yours. I heard she's very good- she fixed my husband's sister. She had pain in her *leg*, just like you have and this physiotherapist worked on her *lower back*! She said all the pain in her leg was coming from her back. A nerve had got caught between some of the bones in her back, and some of the muscles of the back squeezed the nerve as well. Well, the physiotherapist gently pulled on her back bone and on her hip bone and put things back where they should be. And she told her to do some special exercises once the pain

settled down a bit.'

Jenty was excited. 'Do you think we could go to see her? I really want to get better as soon as I can'.

Just then a thought came to Jenty.... 'I asked Jesus to send me some help, and he sent me Narita. I want to find out more about this woman who can help backs, and I want to find out about Jesus who listens to people even though we can't see him.' Somehow her back pain was not so scary now. There was someone who was helping her with her problem and his name was Jesus.

Tammy: We've been hearing about how Jenty hurt her back, and called out to Jesus to send her help. Let's hear what happened when she went to the clinic.

Storyteller: When Jenty finally got to the clinic next day she was feeling terrible. The old bus she travelled on bounced her around and made the pain worse.

The physiotherapist was a middle-aged woman called Sushila. She felt Jenty's back and leg and said Jenty had muscle spasms in her back that were squeezing the nerve in her leg.

'You need to rest so that your back can get better', she said. 'Can you ask your sister or a friend to look after the baby for a few days? You can still feed him but try not to pick him up without help'. When you do pick up the baby make sure you keep your back very straight and your tummy pulled in, and lean your weight on one arm. Use the other arm for the baby. Keep the baby in a cradle or sling that's high enough so you don't have to bend down to see him or cuddle him. You should always do this to protect your back, even if it's not sore.'

Jenty asked, 'What should I have done when I hurt my back? I didn't want to lose my firewood!' Sushila laughed. 'No, but your back is more important than the wood. It would be better to put the load down and wait for someone who could help you. When you hurt yourself suddenly like that, you should always rest for a while. Then maybe you could have used one of the sticks as a walking stick.'

Sushila massaged Jenty's lower back. The muscles were so tight they were squeezing the nerves. Massaging really helped relieve the pain. She showed Narita how to gently rub the sore places so she could do it each day for Jenty.

Then she told Jenty, 'You need to do some *exercises* so the muscles around your lower body get strong. They're still a bit weak and floppy after having the baby. You need those muscles to be strong to protect your back.' She showed Jenty how to pull in the muscles low on her front without holding her breath. 'Hold your tummy in and pull up the muscles that stop you passing urine. Can you hold them while you take three breaths?' Jenty had to practise for a while till she

could do it ten times in a row. 'Now', said Sushila, 'you need to do that ten times a day'. She also showed Jenty an exercise she could do lying on her front. Without twisting the body at all she had to hold her leg straight, then lift it up slowly just a little way off the floor. She had to do it with each leg in turn, to make her back stronger.

'Well done' said Sushila.

Sushila told Jenty, 'When you need to get down low, kneel down and don't squat. Keep your back very straight.'

She gave Jenty some tablets to help the pain, and advised her to rest for a couple of days. Narita said 'Don't worry, I can help you for a few days, we'll manage together, it'll be fun.'

Jenty thanked Sushila very much and then she and Narita left for home. This time Jenty was careful when she sat down in the bus, to get good support behind her back. She sat up straight and didn't slouch, but kept her tummy working hard to protect her back. She used her arms to help hold her up, so when she got home she was feeling much better than when she left that morning.

Narita reminded her about the exercises. 'Hold in your tummy and tighten up your muscles where you pass urine. Take three breaths. Do this ten times in a row, ten times a day. OK? And lie on your front and lift up each straight leg in turn, just off the floor.' 'I'll do them, I promise' said Jenty.

Jenty felt grateful to Sushila and Narita, and much more hopeful. Then she remembered 'I asked Jesus to help me, and he really did. Thank you Jesus! I need to find out more about you- can you help me to do that too?'

Carol: This is Women of Hope, and we've heard some good advice about what to do if we hurt our backs. Imagine if the story didn't end and we never knew what happened to Jenty! I always like to know what happened next, don't you?

Tammy: We've had some stories about things that happened in the first days and months after Jesus died, came alive again, and went back to heaven. Those early followers of Jesus started to preach the good news, that anyone who believed in Jesus could be put right with God. Some people accepted the message with great joy; but others didn't like it. At this time they were still in Jerusalem, the capital city. Fran's going to tell us what happened next. This is a true story from God's word, the Bible. (Acts ch 7-8)

Fran: One of the leaders of Jesus' followers was called Stephen. God had blessed him with great

gifts to heal people. He was also a powerful speaker, known for his wisdom. But a group of men, from different parts of the Roman Empire, didn't agree with Stephen and argued against his message. They even bribed men to tell lies, saying that Stephen was speaking against God and his holy law.

So Stephen was arrested and brought before the Council. He gave a long talk about how God had showed their ancestors what he was like. God gave them his good law to live by, and blessed them in many ways. Yet many times in the past their people had broken God's laws and turned to worship idols. Their ancestors went to God's temple, said Stephen, but they didn't know what the true God was like- you could tell that by how they acted. They had killed many of God's prophets, and now their descendants had betrayed and murdered Jesus, God's son and holy servant.

You can imagine how angry the Council members became. They forgot all about what the law said to do. They rushed at Stephen and dragged him out of the city, and threw big stones at him, crushing him. Stephen called out 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' He knelt down and cried in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin!' And then he died.

Carol: Stephen was a brave man! He believed with all his heart that Jesus was sent by God to save people from their sins. And he was prepared to die for telling people about Jesus.

Tammy: Stephen's message was very bold, but it was true. And his message was not just for the Jewish nation...it was for us too. And we're all like those members of the Council; we don't like to be told that we're wrong, do we? But deep down in our hearts we know it's true- we've all turned our backs on God at some time, haven't we? We've done things we know are wrong, and put other things first in our hearts.

Carol: How have you learned about God? What do you think he is like?... You know, God has already *shown himself* to us in his wonderful *creation*. When you see how beautiful and complicated the earth is, or when you see the stars at night, don't you think that the creator must be incredibly clever, and powerful? And he must love things to be well organized and beautiful. When you see how he made each creature with its perfect place in nature, don't you think that he must *care* for all his creation - including us? ...

Tammy: I know I do! And God has shown himself through his word the *Bible*, written by his prophets. But God has shown us what he is like *especially through Jesus*. Jesus was God in

human form, and he showed us how holy and loving and powerful God is. Jesus taught us how God wants us to live, and he gave his life to take the punishment that we deserved, so we could be friends with God. He came to bring us new life.

Fran: That's right- and that's partly why Stephen was willing to live and die for Jesus. But let me tell you what happened next.

While the men were stoning Stephen to death, a young man named Saul stood by watching. He agreed with what they were doing. More than that- Saul started to persecute the believers in Jesus. Going from house to house, he and his men dragged out both men and women, and put them in jail. Anyone who could escape left Jerusalem, only leaving the main leaders there.

But it didn't stop these people talking about Jesus. Everywhere they went they spread the message that Jesus was God's promised one. Some of them healed people and threw out demons with the power of Jesus. So more and more people believed in Jesus and received God's Holy Spirit. And *they* went and told others. So the good news about Jesus began to spread far beyond Jerusalem.

Carol: Are you surprised that they kept on spreading the message? Especially when it would have been much safer to keep quiet? What do you think you would have done?

Fran: That's a good question Carol. Even now, many people who follow Jesus get into trouble. Sometimes it's trouble from their families, sometimes from their communities or governments. Sometimes they feel they have to keep quiet. What keeps them going?

Tammy: I think it's because they've found new life in following Jesus. They see the power that Jesus has, they know God has shown himself through Jesus, and they want their friends to have the same hope and joy that they have.

Fran: That story is true, and it happened almost 2000 years ago. Since then, the message of Jesus has spread all around the world. God keeps reaching out to people like you, because he loves you so much. I hope that you accept his message, and share it with others.

Carol: Here on Women of Hope, that's why we talk about Jesus all the time. Because we believe

this message is *true*, and we want to share it with you. I hope you will think about it. And let talk about it again next time.

Tammy: We'll pray for you, and ask God to show you what he is like and how much he loves you. If you'd like to ask any questions, or tell us about your life, you can write to us in care of this station or visit our website at TWR Women of Hope TWRwomenofhope.org. We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.

© Copyright Trans World Radio 2012